

CETL Briefing Papers – Centre for Learner Development

Jean Dyson and Debra Cureton

Jean Dyson, School of Art & Design

Aims of the Initiative

This initiative relates to the provision of study skills support, for undergraduate students who are studying Art and Design degrees. It promotes the delivery of subject specific study skills provided within School by Art and Design by Art and Design professionals. This initiative aims provided accessible and subject relevant study skills support. This initiative aims to impact on the retention, progression and satisfaction of Art and Design undergraduates

Description of the Initiative

The Centre for Learner Development (CLD) was set up in 2006 to support Art and Design Students with their academic work and thus aid student retention and progression. Prior to this one-to-one student support was available in the School of Art and Design, but it took place in a building situated away from the School of Art and Design and was not widely publicised or indeed, widely used.

The Centre provide support for a Research and Study Skills Module that is taught to all first year students, which was designed to teach students the academic skills they needed to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree in an Art and Design discipline. This module was a major tool in promoting the services of CLD to students.

Evaluation and impact of the Initiative

In the academic year 2005/2006 study support tutors helped 44 students. After establishing the Centre in the School of Art and Design and the teaching of the Research and study Skills module, the Centre supported 168 Art and Design students during the academic year 2006/2007 and in the following year 253 students. In the academic year 2008/2009 the Centre provided 594 sessions to support students ranging from essay planning and writing, time management to PebblePAD help.

Through the use of the University's VLE, PebblePAD, CLD was able to incorporate an electronic Individual Learning Plan (ILP) into the early weeks of the module. This allowed staff to identify any 'at risk' students and offer them one-to-one support before they ran the risk of dropping out of their courses. As a result of the ILP 48 students were contacted and offered a place on a time management workshop and 171 students were sent letters offering them one-to-one support with a study support tutor. As a result of using the VLE it was also possible to produce audio Podcasts to support the module content and develop study skills tip sheets as enhanced Podcasts to make flexible and visual learning available to widening participation students.

CLD staff set up an attendance monitoring system to understand why students were not attending lectures and to give support to these students. Of all the students contacted through this initiative 94% either progressed or graduated in the academic year 2007/2008. The School progression rate for the same academic year was 68% (information taken from SITS data)

Students Personal Academic Tutors (PATs) are notified when students are contacted by CLD staff whether it is to do with attendance or supporting academic issues. This link between CLD and the PATs provides an effective safety net for all Art and Design students.

Once that study skills and student support have been established within the department, the next step has been to embed these into the curriculum. This was achieved through working with subject staff from the outset of the initiative. Subject staff were involved in the development of the Study Skills and Research Module. CLD staff attempted to up-skill subject staff in the delivery of study skills, which encouraged them to engage with the delivery of the module and embedding this understanding within their subject area. Some staff immediately saw the benefits of this, as it resulted in an increased student performance within their modules (See above). This encouraged more reluctant staff to engage with the embedding process. Once the majority of staff were engaged, the lead for the module became the responsibility of the subject leaders and not the responsibility of the CLD. CLD then provided support at different levels that were required by the subject staff.

The provision of tailored academic support, that is delivered from within the School and by Art and Design professionals has important impacts on the first year experience of Art and Design undergraduates. This support influences retention and progression, provides accessible support for Art and Design students which can lead to increased up take of study skills, increases student satisfaction and supports the widening participation agenda. These are outlined below:

- The retention and progression figures for the School of indicate that although student numbers in Art & Design have decreased between 2006 and 2009, the percentage of students who have progressed from year one to two and from year two to three have remained stable. (figures to follow)
- It was found that art students prefer support to be available within the School. When student support was in a different building it was a little used facility. When CLD was set up in the School and publicised through the Research and Study Skills module student numbers increased and continued to increase year on year.

Support provided in an accessible manner for Art & Design Students.

- Feedback from students seeking study support indicates that they appreciate support from tutors who have an understanding of art and design. A questionnaire was handed to students who use the Centre for Learner Development; 100% of students said that they preferred support to be housed within the School of Art and Design and 88% wanted the support tutor to have a background in Art and Design, 94% thought it was a useful facility 27% of students thought the Centre could be improved but the improvement was to extend the service and space allocated to it. Information from LIS indicates that, for 2007, only 3% of students using study skills via LIS were from SAD.

Increased Student Satisfaction

- Evaluation of the impact of the Work of CLD is measured by such 'tools' as module evaluation questionnaires, student feedback through student/staff liaison committees, and generic surveys such as the Student Satisfaction Survey and the Student Voice project. These sources have shown that CLD offers much more to the student experience than the study skills support. Part of the work of CLD provides an insight into student expectations that can be used to inform subject tutors to support the work they do.

Support for the Widening Participation Agenda

- Students come from very diverse backgrounds. Our research has shown that widening participation students benefit from guidance on how to approach study at a higher educational level, flexibility for students with caring responsibilities or work commitments and language help for international students.

Policy Implications

Stakeholders

- Subject area experts provide subject specific study skills for Art and Design Students
- Embedding study skills into the curriculum is crucial for art and design students.
- Engage subject staff in the delivery of study skills is important to the embedding of study skills

Hurdles

- Engaging subject staff in the process of embedding
Subject staff understanding the importance of study skills for the Art and Design Undergraduate

HE Sector & International Market

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Business Case

Best Practice

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Expert Contacts and Links

Jean Dyson
School of Art and Design
J.Dyson@wlv.ac.uk